

CLAIMS

Claims 1 - 17 (Cancelled)

Claim 18 (Previously Presented): A method of producing a food product portion comprising the steps of:

- slicing a plurality of food product slices cut off from a block of sausage, cheese, or ham;
- shaping the plurality of food product slices to form a front shaped slice and a rear shaped slice such that the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice do not lie flat on a means;

- depositing the plurality of food product slices on the means; and
- conveying away the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice;

- slowing the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice so that the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice are piled up and;

- compressing the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice such that the shape of the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice are changed relative to the shape of the food product slices before the slices are piled up;

wherein the speed of the front shaped slice is reduced relative to the successive rear shaped slice so that the rear shaped slice is pushed up against the front shaped slice due to the greater speed of the rear shaped slice while reducing the spacing between the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice so that the rear shaped slice is pushed up against the front shaped slice.

Claim 19 (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 18, wherein the food product slices are folded.

Claim 20 (Cancelled):

Claim 21 (Withdrawn): A device for producing food product portions, having a means (4) for shaping food product slices cut off from a block of sausage, cheese or ham (11), characterized

in that it comprises a means (5) for changing the spacing (3) between the food product slices (1), wherein the means (5) slows down the food product slices (1) and piles them up.

Claims 22 - 24 (Cancelled):

Claim 25 (Withdrawn): A device for slicing food product blocks, comprising a means (4) for changing the shape of a food product slice (1), at least one parameter of the means (4) being adjustable and the at least one parameter being the position of the means (4) relative to the cutting plane and/or relative to the food product slice (1) as it falls, adjustment of the parameter(s) taking place during the operation of the device, preferably during slicing, characterised in that it comprises a detecting means (10), which detects at least one characteristic of the food product block (11) to be sliced and/or of the cut-off food product slices (1) and changes at least one parameter of the means (4) as a function thereof.

Claim 26 (Withdrawn): A device according to claim 25, characterised in that adjustment is effected by at least one actuator.

Claims 27 - 28 (Cancelled)

Claim 29 (Withdrawn): A method of severing food product slices (1) from food product blocks, the shape of the food product slice being changed by a means (4) after severing, at least one parameter of the means (4) being adjustable, the at least one parameter being the position of the means (4) relative to the cutting plane and/or relative to the slice as it falls, the at least one adjustable parameter of the means (4) being changed during slicing of the food product block, characterised in that a detecting means (10) detects at least one characteristic of the food product block (11) to be sliced and/or of the cut-off food product slices (1) and at least one parameter of the means (5) is changed as a function thereof.

Claim 30 (Previously Presented): A method as in claim 18, wherein the rear shaped slice is pushed up against the front shaped slice such that the front shaped slice does not stick to the rear shaped slice.

Claim 31 (Cancelled):

Claim 32 (Previously Presented): A method as in claim 18, wherein the means includes a first conveyor belt and a second conveyor belt such that the front shaped slice and rear shaped slice are deposited on the first conveyor belt and transferred to the second conveyor belt which exhibits a slower conveying speed than the first conveyor belt.

Claim 33 (Previously Presented): A method as in claim 32, wherein the first conveyor belt and the second conveyor belt form a conveying plane.

Claim 34 (Previously Presented): A method as in claim 32, wherein the first conveyor belt is arranged above the second conveyor belt such that the front shaped slice and rear shaped slice falls from the first conveyor belt onto the second conveyor belt.

Claim 35 (Previously Presented): A method as in claim 32, wherein the conveying speed of the second conveyor belt is less than the sum of the conveying speed of the first conveyor belt plus the speed at which a shaped product slice fall from the first conveyor belt onto the second conveyor belt.

Claim 36 (Previously Presented): A method as in claim 32, wherein the shaping of the plurality of food product slices includes contacting the plurality of food product slices with rollers of a product folder so that after contact with the product folder, the kinetic energy of the plurality of food product slices is sufficient for the plurality of food product slices to achieve a folded position.

Claim 37 (Previously Presented): A method of producing a food product portion comprising the steps of:

- slicing a plurality of food product slices cut off from a block of sausage, cheese, or ham;
- shaping the plurality of food product slices to form a front shaped slice and a rear shaped slice by contacting each food product slice with a product folder so that after contact

with the product folder, the kinetic energy of the food product slice is sufficient for the food product slice to achieve a folded position;

detecting at least one characteristic of the food product block to be sliced, a cut-off food product slice, or both;

adapting the product folder, wherein the parameters of the product folder are adapted so that the food product slices are always formed into the same shape;

depositing the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice on a first conveyor belt at a spacing such that the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice do not lie flat on the first conveyor belt;

conveying away the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice;

compressing the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice such that the shape of the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice are changed relative to the shape of the food product slices before the slices are piled up; and

transferring the shaped food product slices to a second conveyor belt which exhibits a slower conveying speed than the first conveyor belt so that the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice are then slowed down and piled up onto the second conveyor belt,

wherein the speed of the front shaped slice is reduced relative to the successive rear shaped slice so that the rear shaped slice is pushed up against the front shaped slice due to the greater speed of the rear shaped slice while reducing the spacing between the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice so that the rear shaped slice is pushed up against the front shaped slice;

wherein the first conveyor belt assists the product folder in folding each food product slice;

wherein the rear shaped slice is pushed up against the front shaped slice such that the front shaped slice does not stick to the rear shaped slice;

wherein the rear shaped slice is pushed up against the reshaped front slice such that the orientation of the front shaped slice and the rear shaped slice are changed.

Claim 38 (Previously Presented): A method as in claim 37, wherein the first conveyor belt and the second conveyor belt form a conveying plane.

Claim 39 (Previously Presented): A method as in claim 36, wherein the first conveyor belt assists the product folder in folding each food product slice.

Claim 40 (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 18, further including the steps of detecting at least one characteristic of the food product block to be sliced, a cut-off food product slice, or both, and

adapting the product folder, wherein the parameters of the product folder are adapted so that the food product slices are always formed into the same shape.

Claim 41 (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 40, wherein the at least one characteristic is height of the product, the thickness of the food product, the type of food product, the temperature of the food product, or a combination thereof.

Claim 42 (Currently Amended): A method according to claim 32, wherein the first conveyor belt is raised and lowered ~~so that~~ to assist in piling up food product ~~stacks are produced~~.

Claim 43 (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 37, wherein the at least one characteristic is height of the product, the thickness of the food product, the type of food product, the temperature of the food product, or a combination thereof.

Claim 44 (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 37, wherein the first conveyor belt is raised and lowered so that food product stacks are produced.